

ON THE SLATE

TUESDAY, DEC. 14

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
Fruitland, Idaho, vs. La Grande, 6 p.m.
Enterprise at Joseph, 7 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL
Enterprise at Joseph, 5:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, DEC. 16

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
Vale at La Grande, 7 p.m.
Bobcat Christmas Classic, Union and Powder Valley High Schools
Enterprise vs. Powder Valley, Powder Valley High School, 4:30 p.m.
Jordan Valley vs. Imbler, Union High School, 4:30 p.m.
Elgin vs. Imbler JV, Powder Valley High School, 7:30 p.m.
Cove vs. Union, Union High School, 7:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL
Bobcat Christmas Classic, Union and Powder Valley High Schools
Enterprise vs. Powder Valley, Powder Valley High School, 3 p.m.
Jordan Valley vs. Cove, Union High School, 3 p.m.
Crane vs. Imbler, Powder Valley High School, 6 p.m.
Elgin vs. Union, Union High School, 6 p.m.

FRIDAY, DEC. 17

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL
Lewis-Clark State at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Lewis-Clark State at Eastern Oregon, 5:30 p.m.

COLLEGE MEN'S WRESTLING
Eastern Oregon vs. Wayland Baptist, Reno, Nevada, 6:30 p.m.

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
La Grande vs. Bonners Ferry, Idaho, Stanfield High School, 7 p.m.
Wallowa vs. Umatilla JV, Helix High School, 4 p.m.
Joseph at Prairie City, 7:30 p.m.
Bobcat Christmas Classic, Union High School
Elgin vs. Union JV, 9 a.m.
Cove vs. Enterprise, 1:30 p.m.
Powder Valley vs. Imbler, 4:30 p.m.
Union vs. Jordan Valley, 7:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL
Wallowa vs. Umatilla JV, Helix High School, 2 p.m.
Joseph at Prairie City, 6 p.m.
Bobcat Christmas Classic, Union High School
Enterprise/Powder Valley loser vs. Crane/Imbler loser, Union High School, 10:30 a.m.
Jordan Valley/Cove loser vs. Elgin/Union loser, Union High School, noon
Enterprise/Powder Valley winner vs. Crane/Imbler winner, Union High School, 3 p.m.
Jordan Valley/Cove winner vs. Elgin/Union winner, Union High School, 6 p.m.

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Mountaineer Breanna Shaffer (14) defends against a serve from Evergreen University at Eastern Oregon University on Friday, Oct. 1, 2021.

Out with a bang

EOU duo earns second consecutive spot on All-American honors list

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Two Mountaineers are back on the NAIA All-American lists after stellar seasons. Junior Cambree Scott was named to the second team and senior Breanna Shaffer was named honorable mention on Thursday, Dec. 9. Both players made the All-American list for the second consecutive season and were also named first-team all-Cascade Collegiate Conference. “It’s such an honor for them as well as Eastern Oregon volleyball,” Eastern head coach Kaki McLean-Morehead said. “Both Cam and Bre are the foundation that our offense



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Eastern Oregon University volleyball player Cambree Scott, shown Friday, Sept. 10, 2021, prior to the Mountaineers’ match against Walla Walla University, is EOU’s career leader in blocks and block assists.

is built upon.” The duo was crucial to Eastern’s 26-9 season, anchoring the front line for the Mountaineers. The team defeated

See, EOU/Page A8

PREP NEWS AND NOTES



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Brady Hutchins (22) drives past Nyssa defender Carlos Ramirez (2) during the match between La Grande and Nyssa boys’ basketball teams at La Grande High School on Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021. The La Grande Tigers secured a convincing 61-43 victory over the vis-

Upperclassmen lead way to undefeated start

Tigers jump out to 4-0 start after weekend sweep, No. 1 ranking in Class 4A

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — After a 2-0 start to the season, La Grande High School boys basketball head coach Mark Carollo said that this weekend’s road trip to the Portland area would be a huge early-season test. The Tigers passed that test with flying colors. La Grande defeated both Molalla and Estacada by large margins to improve to 4-0 on the year and earn a top spot in the OSAA Class 4A state rankings. The Tigers beat the Indians 53-22 on Friday, Dec. 10 and followed up with a 56-30 win over the Rangers on Dec. 11. While other teams look for new players to step up at the beginning of the year, the Tigers’ pack of upperclassmen is already setting the tone. Seniors Devin Bell and Brady Hutchins have been the models of consistency thus far, leading the way on both ends of the court. Hutchins has heated up from beyond the arc on several occasions and averages a team-high 11.5 points per game early in the year. For Bell, the senior commands the paint on both offense and defense. Bell is scoring 8.5 points per game and dominating in the post. The Tigers have been off to a hot start in non-league action, holding opponents to 35.8 points per game and averaging over 50 points per contest. With 14 upperclassmen on the roster, La Grande is looking like a fine-tuned unit early on. After the road trip to Portland, the Tigers have three straight home contests this week, against Fruitland, Vale and Bonners Ferry.

City 51-33 and Pine Eagle 64-9, then won the finale against Powder Valley 51-30. Glenn was solid throughout the tournament as she scored 27, 22 and 26 points on consecutive days. Her season high stands at 31 in a win over Adrian at the Union Lions Tournament on Dec. 4. With Glenn leading the way for a steady group of upperclassmen on Union’s roster, the Bobcats are off to an ideal start to the season.

La Grande wrestlers setting the tone early

LA GRANDE — At the area’s largest wrestling tournament of the year, the La Grande boys wrestlers defended home turf in a strong showing at this year’s Muilenburg. The Tigers took home four individual title winners en route to a narrow team title over second-place Hermiston at the annual tournament in La Grande on Dec. 11. Senior Braden Carson has looked unstoppable early on, as the two-time state champion is aiming for similar success this season. Carson went undefeated during the 145-pound competition and defeated Bishop Kelly’s Carlos Valdez in the final match. Carson is the anchor for the Tigers as he seeks to make history with a third individual title and help La Grande reclaim the team 4A state championship. Sophomore Mason Wolcott has been dominant at the 106-pound level, taking home a first-place title at the Muilenburg. An added boost to La Grande’s already deep roster has been senior Brody MacMillan, who missed all of last season with a knee injury. MacMillan was back at this year’s Muilenburg and took home top honors at the 195-pound weight class. Junior Cole Shafer won the 170-pound weight division, rounding out a strong overall showing by the Tigers. Through two tournaments this year, La Grande has come away with top placements. A strong mix of young talent with consistent upperclassmen will go a long way for the Tigers in their pursuit of a state championship.

Powder Valley boys defend home court at Calvin Hiatt Tournament

NORTH POWDER — Recent success on the gridiron may have fans thinking Powder Valley is a football school, but the Badgers’ hot start on the hardwood suggests three-day slate of games. Union knocked off Prairie

See, Prep news/Page A8

A twist — Wilcox turned down Ducks



JOHN CANZANO
TALKING SPORTS

Turns out Justin Wilcox didn’t get passed over for the University of Oregon head coaching job. He turned the Ducks down. Oregon AD Rob Mullens formally offered Wilcox the job on Friday, Dec. 10, per multiple sources. The kid from Junction City High interviewed well and was told a marketing campaign would be shaped around his return to Oregon. The plan even included T-shirts that would be printed and distributed at his introductory news conference.

On Dec. 10, Wilcox told Oregon, “No thanks.” I’ll bet Mullens nearly fell over. Dan Lanning was introduced Dec. 13 as Oregon’s head football coach. The 35-year old former Georgia defensive coordinator jumped all over the opportunity. I hope he wins big and gives Phil Knight the national title he covets. But I’ll forever wonder what Wilcox might have done at Oregon. Maybe Wilcox, who played his college ball in Eugene, will talk about it one day. Maybe he’ll even take the UO job the next time it opens, but as we peel back the events of the last week a few things become evident. Among them: •Oregon interviewed UCLA coach Chip Kelly but the Ducks appeared focused on putting a great defensive mind in charge. Three confirmed candi-



John Hefti/The Associated Press, File

Oregon Athletic Director Rob Mullens formally offered California head coach Justin Wilcox, pictured, the Oregon head coaching job on Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, per multiple sources. Wilcox turned the job down.

dates: Lanning, Wilcox and BYU coach Kalani Sitake are stars on the defensive side of the ball. Going with a defense-first hire is an interesting course correction for Oregon and may end up being an antidote to the offensive-minded hires at USC (Lincoln Riley) and Washington (Kalen DeBoer). Not the worst strategy for Oregon. •The Ducks strong denial that Lanning had the job on Dec. 10 makes more sense now. Lanning moved into the No. 1 position after Wilcox turned Oregon down. Lanning probably knew he had the job but I’m told the Ducks paused to make one final “Hail Mary” run at Wilcox early Dec. 11. The Cal coach slept on it and told Oregon he still wasn’t coming. Lanning was then

announced as the hire at 2 p.m. PT by Mullens. •The University of Oregon is a dramatically different place than what Wilcox left in the late 1990s. The facilities look different. The expectations are sky high. Mario Cristobal, for example, won 10 games this season (including a victory over Ohio State) and was greeted with rampant fan criticism for not winning 11 or 12 games. Mark Helfrich, another native Oregonian, took the Ducks to the College Football Playoff but then got vilified and fired two seasons later. I wonder how all this played into Wilcox’s decision to stay put. •None of what I’m reporting here reflects poorly on Lanning. In fact, Wilcox may have given the Georgia assis-

tant even more leverage in his negotiations with the Ducks. Lanning badly wanted the job. He was enthusiastic about it and will be armed with budget, resources, a deep assistant coaches’ salary pool. It reminds me of the Oregon men’s basketball hire of Dana Altman in 2010. Altman was not Oregon’s first or second or third choice in that hiring process. UO offered Tom Izzo and Jaime Dixon first. It also talked with Mark Few and some others about the job but Altman was the one who actually took it. That story ends with a line of 20-win seasons and a Final Four. If Lanning takes the football program to the promised land, it’s a massive win.

See, Canzano/Page A8